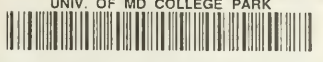


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SERMON

ON THE

RESTORATION OF THE INTERIOR

OF

CHRIST CHURCH,

PHILADELPHIA,

NOVEMBER 11, 1882,

BY

EDWARD A. FOGGO, RECTOR.

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SERMON.

“OUR HOLY AND OUR BEAUTIFUL HOUSE, WHERE OUR FATHERS
PRAISED THEE.”

—ISAIAH lxiv. v. 11 (in part).

SURELY we may apply these words of the prophet to the venerable building in which we reassemble to-day! After an interval, which has been devoted to improvement and restoration, we return to its sacred precincts; and with hearts aglow with gratitude and love, we enter again the portals of our holy and beautiful house, where our fathers praised the Lord. *Holy* it is,—from the association of the worship which, for well nigh two hundred years, has been offered on this spot. *Holy*,—from the prayers and praises which have ascended

to the Triune God, from generations of those whose lives were resplendent with lofty aspirations and noble deeds, and whose deaths were "precious in the sight of the Lord." *Holy*,—from the memories of the thousands who have been signed with the sign of the cross, on their entrance to the "kingdom of heaven" upon earth; of those upon whose bended heads apostolic hands have been laid, to invoke the seven-fold gifts of grace, and to strengthen and to bless; of those who have plighted here the vows which were to bind until death did them part, and whose new relationship was solemnized and blessed by the chosen priest of the Lord; of those who, on bended knee, surrounded the altar upon which were laid the emblems of the "body broken and the blood shed" on Mount Calvary; and of those who, having finished their course in faith, were laid to rest, to await the general resurrection in the last day.

Beautiful, too;—yes, beautiful in its stately

simplicity; its walls free from gaudy and meretricious coloring; its open seats, plain and ready for all, and in which "rich and poor might meet together;" its broad aisles, with the carved stones which "preach" to those able and willing to receive the lessons; its old pulpit and prayer desks, replaced and again painted in the pure white which originally marked them; its old organ, repaired for a time at least; and its bells, which have "rung out the old year and rung in the new" so often, furnished with appliances to make their labor easier! Holy and beautiful, indeed—"our house, in which our fathers praised the Lord."

With the general history of this church many of you are familiar; and all present doubtless know something of the same. It is not my purpose, therefore, at this time to speak of it at length, but merely to glance at the alterations' made at different times in the arrangement of the furniture and the interior decoration of the building.

The general appearance of the old church on the outside view presents no change from the original, but stands as it was built in 1727-44. The interior has been materially altered three times: once in 1835-6, again in 1854, and then restored, as far as possible, in this year of grace 1882.

Some changes were made earlier than those of 1836, when, in July, 1740, the pulpit was placed in the middle of the chancel, in order that more room for pews could be obtained.* The first church on this spot, built in 1695, had (as we see still in some old English churches) the prayer desk and pulpit on the north side. Probably, when this present structure was first opened—built as it was around the old one, and encompassing it until finished—the same arrangement may have been observed; and this will account for the fact that no win-

* A resolution of the vestry reads: “*Resolved*, That the pulpit be removed to the east end of the middle aisle.”

dow is in that place to this day ; and the door by which the rector entered from his house on what is now known as Lagrange Street was near by. The changes in 1835-6 were more sweeping. Then the floor was laid over the original brick pavement, and the old high and square pews replaced by low cushioned ones ; and the whole interior of the church remodelled. In doing this, both good taste and ecclesiastical usage were transgressed ; and the whole interior ceased to correspond with the style and architecture of the noble building. It was, in one sense at least, putting "new wine into an old bottle." The present deep galleries were then remodelled and placed as they stand now, and the stairways to them (which so disfigured the church) also built. Formerly the entrance to the galleries was through the small rooms on either side of the chancel, and the tower room was (as it still properly is) the vestry room. In the church, as originally built, I believe there was no gallery, but I am unable

to state when it was first placed in the church. The pure white and gilt of the coloring gave place to the dull gray on the wall, and the imitation of walnut on the furniture.

In 1854, during the rectorship of the Rev. Dr. Dorr, the church was repainted in the same style, and the doors opened into the chancel from either side. The chancel rails were brought forward from the line of 1836, when first changed, and placed the full length, and made straight; and the communion table, with a piece cut from the top made to fit around the base of the pulpit, and so became permanent, instead of being brought for use on Communion Sundays, and on others placed near the east wall, and hidden by the large pulpit.

In 1870 the pulpit was removed to the north pillar, and the new altar presented and placed where it now stands; and underneath it deposited with care the old table, where it remains to this day.

This year the restoration was begun. There

seemed to be a general desire on the part of the congregation that this should be done; and when the vestry appointed the committee to consider the matter and arrange for the funds with which to accomplish it, they were much encouraged to find that the feeling was appreciated by many of our best and most intelligent citizens, who responded liberally to the appeal. Some from old association; others, from a simple desire to see what one termed "an old landmark revived," gave generously to the object. The work was begun under the direction of an architect whose love for old things and whose taste in ecclesiastical matters are well known. The result speaks for itself. The old slabs have been brought to light, and the inscriptions (some of which were pronounced to be illegible in 1836, when the floor was put over them) have been deciphered. Some "Old Mortality" may yet arise to make them still clearer. The original pavement was, to a great degree, recovered, and, where want-

ing, replaced, and tiling in harmony with the whole laid upon it. The original doorways have been opened, and the old staples were found in their place and again put to use.

What was known as the "Washington Door" has been reopened, and serves again, as it was originally intended, for an entrance to the south gallery. Tradition says that "the father of his country" always entered there, as nearer to the pew placed at his disposal, which stood close to the present site of the pulpit, and which was taken away in 1836, and the part of it used by him presented by the [then] vestry to Independence Hall, where it is still to be seen. The pulpit now stands where it did prior to 1769, and on it the glory and moulding underneath, which were taken away in 1836, have been reproduced. When the flooring was removed the western wall of the church building of 1695 was clearly traced.

Two of the stones recorded in 1836 as "illegible" exhibited traces of inscription which led

the committee to identify the one over the Rev. Alexander Cummings, who died April 19, 1741, having been rector here for fifteen years, and the other as that of "John Hartman of St. Christopher's," who was buried October 26, 1726. This latter stone must therefore have been in the original church. Several other portions of different inscriptions have been made out.

Doubtless we are all agreed that it would have been better to leave the interior of the church as it was originally designed and not a stick or stone to have been touched, except when necessary repairs required it. We all regret that any attempt to alter it was even entered upon; but when the demand for pews was so great as to lead those in charge to mar the whole effect of the interior in order to accommodate this demand, surely we are justified in returning, so far as practicable, to the original design. This point has steadily been kept in view by the architect and the com-

mittee—to model everything on the old plan—and the old furniture has been restored wherever it was possible to do so.

I say again, the result speaks for itself. Oak pews, corresponding in every respect except in the height, have replaced the painted pine ones, and the old moth-eaten upholstery has disappeared. Some, of course, will never become accustomed to the change, for it is unlike the interior of their recollection; yet I do not hesitate to say that no one, unless blinded by prejudice, and who is able to appreciate the harmony and fitness of things, can fail to hail this restoration as one of the greatest improvements that could possibly have been made.

When in October of the coming year the Church's centennial is held in this "our holy and beautiful house," where, in 1783, our fathers met and praised God for the establishment of our branch of the Church Catholic, they will find very much the old building as it then stood, with this difference, that its walls

can now hold only a small proportion of the members of our communion, while then it could contain them all.

Two bishops composed then the upper house, and held their deliberations in the narrow quarters of this small room on the north side of the chancel. The clerical and lay delegates were few then, and all were consulting about the interests of a "feeble folk," but which now has become a strong and increasing body. In the words of the prophet, the "little one" has indeed, by the blessing of God, become a "thousand" and a "small one" become a "strong nation."

Thus, this, our holy and beautiful house, is becoming enriched year by year by the increasing memories of events connected with our land and church. Not only to members of our communion in this city, but in the whole broad country, it is becoming a brighter centre of attraction and interest.

Surely those of you who still worship here should realize more and more the blessed priv-

ilege; and though so many of its earnest members have, even since my comparatively brief connection here, passed out from the "church militant to join the church triumphant;" and while others from some cause of dissatisfaction (imagined or real) have left, let me to-day affectionately and earnestly urge you who remain and retain your connection here to be more faithful in your devotion and more earnest in your endeavor for the prosperity of this old parish. Pray for the peace of this—your Jerusalem—your city of peace.

Forget not the "assembling of yourselves together" in this holy and beautiful house where your fathers praised the God of Heaven, and forget it not—neglect it not in the observance of all your holy solemnities. Whenever you enter its portals you are, as it were, "encompassed about" with a crowd of "holy witnesses." Here, more than in any spot in our country, the sacred memories of the past in connection with our church do linger; here

we are brought to realize the union in that “mystical body” of which Christ the Redeemer is the “head;” and here we are, as it were, brought face to face with the fact that “living saints and dead but one communion make.”

Then can we take up the words of the saintly George Herbert and sing—

“I joy, dear Mother, when I view
Thy perfect lineaments and hue,
Both sweet and bright.

“Beauty in thee takes up her place,
And dates her letter from thy face
When she doth write.”

Or, in the flowing words of one of our own poets,

“I love the Church, the holy Church,
That o'er our LIFE presides,
The birth, the bridal, and the grave,
And many an hour besides!
Be mine, through life, to live in her,
And when the LORD shall call,
To die in her—the spouse of Christ,
The Mother of us all.”



